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ABSTRACT

Research has indicated that students still seem to rate occupations according to sex role stereotypes. To determine the influence of subject variables on occupational ratings, 105 students and 76 nonstudents rated 35 occupations on various dimensions including masculinity/femininty, and status. Analysis of results indicated substantial sex role stereotyping of occupations along the masculinity/femininity dimension. More than half the occupations were significantly stereotyped by some group. Older nonstudents and older male students (those over age 35) stereotyped occupations the most, while younger nonstudents and older female students stereotyped the least. In general, males tended to stereotype more often than females. There were fewer significant findings for the status dimension, with fewer occupations yielding significant differences. Demographic variables did not have as much impact on status as they did for masculinity/femininity. (JAC)

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EFFECTS OF SUBJECT VARIABLES ON SEX-ROLE ATTITUDES TOWARD OCCUPATIONS

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Effects of Subject Variables on Sex-Role Attitudes Toward Occupations

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Research has indicated that students still seem to rate occupations according to sex-role stereotypes (Brenner & Tomkiewicz, 1979; Geffner, Hicks, & Roberts, 1984; Yanico, 1978). However, researchers have not generally analyzed subject variables to determine whether these are involved in the stereotyping. Studies concerning other aspects of sex-role attitudes have found that subjects, especially females, in educational settings and those over age 35 seem to give less stereotyped responses (Dreyer, Woods, & James, 1981; Greenfeld, Greiner, & Wood, 1980; Gross & Geffner, 1980). Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to determine the effects of these subject variables on ratings of several occupations.

Method

A questionnaire with 35 occupations was administered to 105 students and 76 nonstudents from East Texas. Subjects rated each occupation on various dimensions according to 5-point semantic differential scales; masculinity/femininity and status were the dimensions used in the present study. The data for each occupation were analyzed with 2 X 2 X 2 factorial analyses of variance (sex of subject by age group by sample group). The age group compared subjects over age 35 to those 35 or younger,

and the sample group compared students to nonstudents.

Results

For masculinity/femininity, significant sex of subject main effects were obtained for 6 of the 35 occupations (author, doctor, fashion model, newscaster, psychologist, and veternarian). In each of these cases, males gave significantly more stereotyped responses than did females. Significant age group and sample group main effects were also found for a few occupations. Inspection of the means indicated that the older subjects (over age 35) rated three occupations (college professor, lawyer, and newscaster) significantly more masculine than did the younger subjects. A significant difference was also obtained between students and nonstudents for one occupation (child counselor). The means for these main effects are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

There were also 11 significant age group by sample group interactions. Nine of these interactions were in male-dominated occupations (e.g., doctor, lawyer, pilot, etc.). In all of these cases, nonstudents over age 35 rated the occupations more masculine than did the younger nonstudents; the opposite occurred for students (i.e., the younger students rated them more masculine). For the two significant female-dominated occupations (elementary school teacher and secretary), nonstudents over age 35 gave more feminine ratings than did

younger nonstudents; the opposite occurred for students. The means for these interactions are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Other significant interactions were also obtained, including sex of subject by sample group interactions for three occupations (cook, elementary school teacher, and pilot). However, no pattern or meaningful conclusions were apparent from the data. Significant 3-way interactions were obtained for eight of the occupations (author, college professor, high school teacher, newscaster, psychologist, research scientist, salesperson, and veterinarian). In all these cases, the dominant theme was that male students over age 35 gave the most masculine responses, and younger female nonstudents and older female students gave the least masculine (i.e., most neutral) responses. The means for two typical examples of these 3-way interactions (college professor and psychologist) are shown in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

For the status dimension, there were a few significant sex of subject, age group, and sample group main effects. The results indicated that on three occupations (builder, child counselor, and nurse), females gave significantly higher status ratings than did males. On two feminine-rated occupations (nurse and

telephone operator), nonstudents gave significantly higher status ratings than did students; however, on one masculine-rated occupation (veternarian), nonstudents gave lower status ratings. Four occupations (butcher, fashion model, librarian, and politician) yielded significant age of subject main effects, but no pattern was evident in the data. The means are presented in Table 4. There were also two significant 3-way interactions (for doctor and pilot), but the only similarity was that female students over age 35 gave the lowest status ratings.

Insert Table 4 about here

Discussion

The results indicated that substantial sex-role stereotyping of occupations did occur along the masculinity/femininity dimension. More than one-half of the occupations used in the present study were significantly stereotyped by some group of subjects. This finding corresponds to other recent research concerning sex-role attitudes (e.g., Ruble, 1983). It appears that the older nonstudents and older male students stereotyped occupations the most, while the younger nonstudents and older female students stereotyped the least. In general, males tended to stereotype more often than did females. It should be noted, however, that most of the significant differences in stereotyping occurred for masculine-rated and neutral occupations.

It appears that being employed, or at least not being in

college, did yield less stereotyping for younger subjects, while previous socialization may have had more influence on certain groups of older nonstudents and older male students. This influence of age and education is similar to the findings of other researchers who investigated different aspects of sex-role stereotyping (Dreyer, et al, 1981; Greenfeld, et al, 1981). Since some of the present findings were also significantly influenced by the sex of the subject, future research should therefore include all three demographic variables in order to obtain a more complete picture of sex-role attitudes.

There were not as many significant findings for the status dimension. Fewer occupations yielded significant differences, and the demographic variables analyzed did not have as much impact as they did for masculinity/femininity. However, the present research did not directly compare masculinity/femininity ratings to status ratings. These analyses will be conducted to determine whether a relationship between these dimensions occurred (as was found in previous studies; e.g., Touhey, 1974).

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Table 1

Mean Masculinity/Femininity Ratings of Occupations for Significant Main Effects

Occupation	Subjects	
	Sex of Subject	
	Males	Females
Author	2.8	3.0**
Doctor	2.2	2.5**
Fashion Model	4.5	4.2**
Newscaster	2.7	2.9*
Psychologist	2.5	2.7*
Veternarian	2.1	2.4*
	Age Group	
	Young	Older
College Professor	2.7	2.4**
Lawyer	2.2	1.9*
Newscaster	2.9	2.6***
	Sample Group	
	Students	Nonstudents
Child Counselor	3.2	3.4*

Note. The lower the number, the more masculine the rating on the 5-point scale used.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Mean Masculinity/Femininity Ratings of Occupations for Significant Sample Group by Age Group Interactions

Occupation	Age Group	Sample Group	
		Students	Nonstudents
Butcher*	Young	1.6	1.6
	Older	1.8	1.4
Dentist**	Young	1.9	2.1
	Older	2.1	1.6
Doctor*	Young	2.3	2.6
	Older	2.4	2.2
Elementary School Teacher*	Young	4.0	4.0
	Older	3.6	4.3
Lawyer*	Young	2.2	2.3
	Older	2.2	1.7
Mechanic*	Young	1.4	1.7
	Older	1.7	1.3
Pilot*	Young	1.7	1.9
	Older	2.0	1.5
Police Officer**	Young	1.8	2.0
	Older	2.2	1.5
Politician**	Young	2.0	2.4
	Older	2.2	1.7
Secretary*	Young	4.7	4.5
	Older	4.4	4.9
Truck Driver*	Young	1.5	1.6
	Older	1.9	1.4

Note. The lower the number, the more masculine the rating on the 5-point scale used.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 3

Mean masculinity/femininity ratings for two significant 3-way interactions

Occupation		Subjects	
College Professor**		Students	Nonstudents
Males			
	Young	2.7	2.5
	Older	1.5	2.4
Females			
	Young	2.8	2.9
	Older	2.9	2.1
Psychologist*		Students	Nonstudents
Males			
	Young	2.5	2.5
	Older	1.5	2.5
Females			
	Young	2.7	3.0
	Older	2.8	2.4

Note. The lower the number, the more masculine the rating on the 5-point scale used.

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$

Table 4

Mean Status Ratings of Occupations for Significant Main Effects

Occupation	Subjects	
	Sex of Subject	
	Males	Females
Builder	3.1	3.3*
Child Counselor	3.4	3.8**
Nurse	3.4	3.6*
	Age Group	
	Young	Older
Butcher	2.0	2.2*
Fashion Model	3.8	3.4*
Librarian	2.6	3.1**
Politician	3.8	3.4*
	Sample Group	
	Students	Nonstudents
Nurse	3.4	3.6*
Telephone Operator	2.0	2.3*
Veternarian	2.9	2.6*

Note. The larger the number, the higher the status rating on the 5-point scale used.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$